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Result of Complaints on Intelligence Data

U.S. Makes Contacts With Shah's Foes

By Don Oberdorfer

Washington Post Staff Writer

The United States in recent weeks has initiated substantial and continuing contacts with the opposition to the Shah of Iran and has informed the shah that it was doing so, according to administration officials.

The contacts, coming after years of minimal connections to the internal forces opposing the Iranian leader, are among the early results of growing displeasure in the White House with U.S. embassy and intelligence reporting on political developments in that strife-torn country.

President Carter, in a handwritten memorandum which was dated Nov. 11 and leaked to two newspapers late last week, expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of "political intelligence," with particular reference to Iran, and ordered a top-level review of the subject. White House press secretary Jody Powell, speaking to reporters in St. Louis, yesterday confirmed the substance of the memo but insisted that it "wasn't a chewing out" of Central Intelligence Director Stansfield Turner.

Informed officials said a report from Turner, Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance and national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski is due shortly at the White House to analyze the intelligence failures on Iran and make recommendations for remedying the underlying defects.

The Carter administration is expected to move with great caution in contacts with opposition groups and other changes in its reporting efforts in Iran in view of the tense conditions there. The next two weeks, culminating in the high point of a Moslem holy period on Dec. 11, is considered a particularly difficult period.

Any shifts in policy or operations that would be seen in Tehran as undercutting the shah would go against the strong thrust of U.S. objectives there. But at the same time, failure to remedy the intelligence deficiencies would leave the United States flying blind in a still-developing situation of great international importance, according to concerned officials.

A draft Central Intelligence Agency assessment of mid-August, which was circulated among several government agencies before being rejected by top CIA officials, reported that "Iran is not in a revolutionary or even prerevolutionary situation." Several weeks later well-coordinated demonstrations involving more than 1 million people

in Tehran alone disproved the optimistic estimate—but U.S. intelligence reportedly had little information on how the demonstrations were planned, organized or funded, or who was behind them.

One of the most worrisome gaps, according to official sources, is the scarcity of information about the current activities of the Soviet Union, which shares a 1,200-mile border with Iran and has twice occupied parts of northern Iran since World War II. The Soviets have informed both the shah and the United States that they had no part in the unrest, and there is said to be little hard evidence to the contrary.

However, the sudden public warning by Soviet party chief Leonid Brezhnev on Nov. 19 against U.S. interference in Iran is seen by some U.S. observers as potentially the beginning of a new phase. Soviet press organs had been unusually restrained during the buildup of Iranian unrest, but since Brezhnev's statement Radio Moscow has attacked "imperialist meddling" in Iran, endorsed the struggle to oust Western military and non-military advisers and portrayed the Soviet Union as the protector of the Iranian masses against foreign interference.

There is a consensus among American experts on Iran that the extremely close U.S. relations with the shah and the CIA's partnership with his secret police agency, SAVAK, impeded the development of independent sources of reporting on Iranian internal matters.

Some sources said there was an agreement with the shah, either explicit or tacit, that the United States would have nothing to do with his opponents. Given the extensive SAVAK apparatus, it was considered almost impossible to have any level of contact with opposition forces in Iran without the shah's knowledge.

The controversy over the Iranian estimates has crystallized a longstanding concern attributed to Brzezinski and some others within the administration about the quality of political reporting from open as well as clandestine sources. A number of studies are reported to have been under way even before the "intelligence failure"

in Iran, and others have been authorized since.

Among the matters reportedly under study are identification of key countries and areas of greatest importance to the United States and reallocation of intelligence resources, impediments and difficulties in field reporting, and coordination of efforts. The work of embassy political officers as well as intelligence officers and agents is under review, sources said.

Not far beneath the surface of the policy making is a complicated set of personal and institutional rivalries involving the authority, performance and personality of CIA Director Turner and his agency. The adverse turn in Iran supplied Turner's enemies and critics with cause for complaint. Turner, who is reported to be angry about the leaks, evidently believes they are being deliberately directed against him.

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